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PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLH RUEHLN

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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3405

INFO RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY

RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE

RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE

RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5623

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3342

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3206

RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3866

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1121

RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3864

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001122

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ETTC](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [OSCE](#) [AF](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMEN-AFGHAN JOINT BORDER TRAINING

ORGANIZED BY OSCE

Sensitive but Unclassified. Not for Public Internet.

**¶1.** (SBU) SUMMARY: On August 21, Turkmen and Afghan customs officials completed joint training, facilitated by the OSCE, in Ashgabat and Atamurat (formerly Kerki), a town in southeast Turkmenistan. This was the first ever joint training for Turkmen and Afghan customs officers. The course was aimed at teaching anti-smuggling techniques to prevent drug trafficking across the shared border. The OSCE used former British and U.S. officials as instructors to teach risk and threat assessment, profiling, targeting, and search and detection techniques. The OSCE expects even greater success from its next project on border security, which the Turkmen government strongly supports. The implementation of OSCE customs and border security projects is a sign of improved cooperation within Central Asia and particularly with Afghanistan. END SUMMARY.

**¶2.** (SBU) Political Assistant was able to observe the completion on August 21 of an OSCE project on border security that stemmed from a decision by the OSCE Council of Ministers to increase involvement with Afghanistan. The project consisted primarily of train-the-trainer courses for Turkmen Customs officials. Ten senior Turkmen Customs officers participated in the first stage of the project to become trainers. They in turn trained two additional ten-person groups of Turkmen Customs officials. The first three stages of the program were held in Ashgabat at the Turkmen State Customs Service Training Center.

**¶3.** (SBU) The fourth and final stage of the program, joint training for Turkmen and Afghan customs officials, was held in Atamurat (formerly Kerki), which is close to Imam Nazar, a border crossing point between Turkmenistan and Afghanistan. Imam Nazar was

originally chosen as the training location, but at the suggestion of the OSCE team and Afghan Ambassador in Ashgabat, the Turkmen authorities agreed to shift the location to Atamurat, which had better facilities. Turkmenistan was the first Central Asian country to host an OSCE training program for Afghan customs officials. The eight Afghan participants were taught by their Turkmen colleagues who had participated in the first stages of the program, with the training being overseen by former British and U.S. customs officers.

¶4. (SBU) The course focused on risk and threat assessment, profiling and targeting techniques, and search and detection techniques, which were priorities for the foreign trainers, as well as the Turkmen and Afghan officials. The training included practical exercises and discussion. The OSCE Center in Ashgabat considered this program a great success, and OSCE Ambassador Arsim Zekilli will publish the results in a report to the member states.

¶5. (SBU) This customs training program will be followed by additional joint Afghan-Turkmen training on border security, which will be taught by experts from the UK and Finland. The OSCE expects even greater cooperation and success in the border security project since Chairman of the Turkmen State Border Service Murat Islamov has expressed concern about border security issues. He was previously a close advisor on legal issues to former president Niyazov

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and the founder of the State Migration Service, which is reportedly the best organized and technologically equipped law enforcement agency in Turkmenistan.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: This customs training project signals a new stage in OSCE relations with Turkmenistan, as well as a new willingness on the part of both the OSCE and the Turkmen Government to get involved in Afghanistan. Turkmenistan has transitioned from ostracizing the OSCE for its reporting on human rights and political prisoners in the wake of the assassination attempt on former president Niyazov, to the point that President Berdimuhamedov has discussed OSCE projects with the OSCE Secretary General. END COMMENT.

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